

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON URBAN AFFAIRS

Hearing Date: April 7, 2021 10:30 AM - or upon final adjourn./recess or bill referral if permission granted

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COMMENTS FOR: HB 1803

cindy klempner

Self

Austin, TX

Please Oppose

Linda Mikolajek, Ms.

NAMI Central Texas

Austin, TX

I am a member of NAMI Central TX and I am on their Advocacy committee. I am the parent of a 38 year old son with a Serious Mental Illness, (SMI), who has been homeless (when not in ASH) since 2019. I am asking you to oppose HB 1803. It would create too many barriers in helping to end the homelessness situation in Austin. It is not in the best interest of the homeless situation, and those with S
Thank you.

Judy Briscoe, Citizen

Summerwood Homeowners Association

Austin, TX

Oppose

Marilyn Hartman

Member and Advocate, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Central Texas

Austin, TX

I strongly oppose this bill. It puts too many barriers on municipalities in providing housing for homeless individuals, and homelessness is a big and complex issue in every city in Texas. The same people who don't want to see homeless camps are also advocating for these barriers to providing housing -- they can't have it both ways. Until we have enough affordable housing for everyone, homeless or not, this kind of action is ill-advised. As an advocate for people with mental illness, I can see that this bill smacks of NIMBY -- not in my backyard -- and yet, the homeless need to go somewhere. Where is that somewhere? Are we providing an alternative? I also see in this bill the suggestion that homeless people are unsavory, dangerous and best be out of sight. This is not the case when they get the treatment and supports that they require to become contributing citizens. Please know that these properties that municipalities are buying do have provisions for case management and other supports for these citizens, so they can be successful in their new (non-homeless) living situations. Please do not pass this bill.

Eric Kunish, Advocacy Chair

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Central Texas Affiliate

Austin, TX

I strongly oppose this bill. This is a bill that creates barriers to housing homeless individuals.

Piper Nelson, Ms.

self

Austin, TX

HB 1803 would create significant barriers to efforts to create more housing for individuals experiencing homelessness. I STRONGLY oppose this bill.

aroosa ajani

self

Austin, TX

VOTE AGAINST HB 1803. This bill would create significant barriers to efforts to create more housing for individuals experiencing homelessness. HB 1803 would require municipalities to submit a plan for approval to the County Commissioners Court prior to purchasing or converting a property in that county for the purpose of “house homeless individuals.” The municipality would also be required to post a public notice prior to the purchase or conversion. While the bills was filed in response to the City of Austin’s efforts to purchase and convert hotels into permanent supportive housing for individuals experiencing homelessness, this is a statewide bill that would impact any housing for homeless individuals.

amyna dosani

self

Austin, TX

I urge you to vote against HB 1803.. HB 1803 would require municipalities to submit a plan for approval to the County Commissioners Court prior to purchasing or converting a property in that county for the purpose of “house homeless individuals.” The municipality would also be required to post a public notice prior to the purchase or conversion.

While the bills was filed in response to the City of Austin’s efforts to purchase and convert hotels into permanent supportive housing for individuals experiencing homelessness, this is a statewide bill that would impact any housing for homeless individuals.

Emma Wisniewski-Barker

Self, Data Analyst

Austin, TX

I urge you to vote against HB 1803. It would create significant barriers to efforts to create more housing for individuals experiencing homelessness.

Mary Faithfull, Executive Director

Disability Rights Texas

Austin, TX

Disability Rights Texas provides a wide range of services to ensure that people with disabilities are not discriminated against due to their disability. We also work to make certain that the rights of people with disabilities are enforced, including the right to equal access to programs, services and activities.

There is a well-documented shortage of affordable housing for extremely low income Texans. People with disabilities who receive social security income are part of this income bracket, and can have an even tougher time finding housing if they need an accessible unit.

HB 1803 is a land use bill that creates intentional and arbitrary barriers directed at, and impacting, persons with disabilities. It requires a municipality to gain county approval before it can purchase or convert a property into housing for people experiencing homelessness. To be approved a municipality must submit a plan detailing available services in the area. However, the plan requirements intentionally target people experiencing mental illness by specifically requiring proof of coordination with local mental health authorities. Making the availability of health services for people experiencing mental illness a condition of approving land use for housing intentionally discriminates against people with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act, and violates the Fair Housing Act.

HB 1803 also puts onerous burdens on municipalities trying to create housing for people experiencing homelessness, including a lengthy posted notification period. Therefore, this legislation could result in an increase in institutionalization of people with disabilities, something that goes against the state's Promoting Independence Plan (PIP) required by the federal Olmstead Act. Beyond limiting housing for people with disabilities, a major consequence of this bill is the negative impact it will have on Texans during a disaster. As written HB 1803 prohibits any municipality-owned property from being purchased or "converted" to house people who are experiencing homelessness. This will prohibit municipalities from setting up temporary shelters for homeless residents during emergencies and disasters. For example, this legislation would have disallowed cities from setting up shelters in places like convention centers to save their residents from hypothermia during Uri, or shelter relocation during Harvey. If municipalities cannot set up shelters during a freeze or a flood, people will die.

HB 1803 would limit housing options for people with disabilities experiencing homelessness at a time when the homeless population is growing due to the flood of evictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic and Winter Storm Uri. Not only is this legislation in direct violation of a variety of federal laws, but it will prevent municipalities from practically and appropriately preparing for, and responding to, emergencies and disasters. Contact Tanya Lavelle with questions tlavelle@disabilityrightstx.org

Summer Whitten

Self - RE Investor

Austin, TX

Please vote yes to this bill.

Edward Eason, VP - Housing

CitySquare

Richardson, TX

Please do not amend the local government code to add a requirement that a county has final authority to approve a municipality's purchase of a facility for housing PEH. It is difficult enough for us to redevelop properties for affordable housing in areas where there are employment opportunities and good schools for low-income families. Allowing county governments to override the efforts of city governments will continue to promote the Not in My Back Yard mentality that plagues our communities and concentrates poverty.

Bethany Castro

self, nonprofit director

Victoria, TX

My name is Bethany Castro and I oppose HB 1803. This bill, if passed, will add barriers to people getting housed. The idea that each county must always provide approval before a municipality can make business decisions to best help their homeless residents is preposterous. Will there soon be bills proposed which require county approval before cities can make business dealings to help their housed residents? That answer is a simple "No." This is a direct attack on a city's ability to do what it decides is best to assist their HOMELESS constituents. I ask the committee to kill this bill and instead vote for deeply affordable and accessible housing options.

Alex Meed

Self, cybersecurity analyst

Austin, TX

Chair and members,

It's difficult to understand, from a policy perspective, why one level of local government should be allowed to control another. Cities and counties are independently elected and represent different geographical areas. It would almost be as if the NATO countries had to approve every amendment to the USMCA, or if the National Governors Association had veto power over acts of the Texas Legislature.

But we know why this bill is being offered: a member of the Legislature wants to stop Austin from helping homeless people, in a district he doesn't even represent. Austin is a home-rule city. We deserve to be able to pursue the homelessness policy our elected officials want, and to hold those officials accountable for their policy decisions. This bill would negate that ability for our government and our citizens.

This bill should be left pending in committee, and it should stay there.

Respectfully submitted,

Alex Meed

Sarah Soule-Jensen

SELF

Austin, TX

My name is Sarah Soule-Jensen and I oppose HB 1803. This bill, if passed, will add barriers to people getting housed. I ask the committee to kill this bill and instead vote for deeply affordable and accessible housing options
